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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/553,199	10/13/2005	Koji Tokuda	279096US3PCT	1253
22850	7590	02/01/2010	EXAMINER	
OBLOON, SPIVAK, MCCLELLAND MAIER & NEUSTADT, L.L.P. 1940 DUKE STREET ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314			YANG, JIE	
ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER			
			1793	
NOTIFICATION DATE	DELIVERY MODE			
02/01/2010	ELECTRONIC			

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

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Office Action Summary	Application No. 10/553,199	Applicant(s) TOKUDA ET AL.
	Examiner JIE YANG	Art Unit 1793

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If no period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 10 November 2009.

2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-8, 15 and 16 is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 1-5, 7, 8, 15 and 16 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) 6 is/are objected to.

8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/88/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____

4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____

5) Notice of Informal Patent Application
 6) Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Claim 1-8, 15, and 16 remain for examination.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-5, 7, 8, 15, and 16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kamikawa et al (US 6,413,471 B1, thereafter US'471).

US'471 is applied to claims 1-5, 7, 8, 15, and 16 for the same reason as recited in the previous office actions marked 10/17/2008 and 7/10/2009.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claim 6 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The prior art US'471 does not specify the limitation of "...controlling the flow of the furnace gas to allow the furnace gas to flow in the direction of the movement of the hearth by varying a size of the aperture of the one or more perforations" as recited in the instant claim.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments see "applicant arguments/remarks", filed on 11/10/2009, with respect to objection to the rejections for claims 1-5, 7, 8, 15, and 16 have been fully considered and are not persuasive.

Applicant's arguments are summarized as follows:

1, Claims 1, 2, and 16 of the instant application claim limitations of having flow rate controlling partitions arranged therein for controlling the flow of the furnace gas; allowing to flow in the direction of the movement of the hearth (claims 1 and 16) or maintaining the pressure of the furnace gas in melting step higher than that of the furnace gas in other steps (claims 2 and 16), which are not taught or suggested by the prior art US'471.

2, US'471 teaches suppressing flow of air inside the furnace (col.4, lines 9-22), which is different from the control of the flow direction as recited in the instant claims 1 and 16.

Responses are as follows:

Regarding the arguments 1-2, as pointed out in the previous office actions marked 10/17/2008 and 7/10/2009, US'471 teaches using partition plates to regulate the pressure inside the furnace in order to increase the operation efficiency (Col.8, lines 24-35 of US'471). The Examiner notes that the controlling of flow and direction is a basic function of partition plates, which is evidenced by US'471. US'471 clearly teaches partition plates as the supply portion partitioning means may be provided in the high

temperature atmosphere space portion and the gas passage space portion (Col.3, lines 46-49 of US'471) and adjustable (Col.4, lines 8-22 of US'471). The Examiner notes that the Applicant does not specify the specifically arrangement of the controlling partitions or showing the difference between the partition plate of the instant invention and the partition plate taught by US'471 in the instant claims 1, 2, and 16. Therefore, it is the Examiner's position that the partition plate taught by US'471 has the similar function of the partition plate of the instant invention and It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to arrange the partition plates as demonstrated in US'471 to control the gas pressure in different portions of the furnace, which includes allowing the flow the furnace gas in the direction of the movement of the hearth.

Conclusion

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of

the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jie Yang whose telephone number is 571-2701884.

The examiner can normally be reached on IFP.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Roy King can be reached on 571-2721244. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

JY

/Roy King/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 1793